

Report of the Accreditation Working Group from its September 24-25, 2014 Meeting

Preface

Discussion in the years leading up to and during the 15th Annual FEMA Higher Education Conference led to a widespread call for a working group to explore whether accreditation for emergency management higher education programs was warranted and, assuming so, what standards ought to be used. Representatives of higher education programs and representatives of bodies engaged in the accreditation of emergency management programs were convened for a two day meeting at the Emergency Management Institute by the FEMA Higher Education Program in September 2012. The report of the group's discussions is available at: <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/edu/EMFoundation.asp>.

A collective interest in extending the accreditation discussion beyond those in the working group led to an informal survey to gauge support for accreditation being sent to a representative of each institution offering one or more degree programs in the summer of 2013. Significant support for accreditation was found even while there was not consensus as to what accrediting body was desirable. The survey report is available at: <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/edu/EMFoundation.asp>.

Based on the existing consensus that accreditation was desirable, the FEMA Higher Education Program convened the working group again in August 2013. The group did not focus on what accrediting body was desirable but instead began drafting what an accreditation process might look like and general program standards. The report of the group's discussion is available at: <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/edu/EMFoundation.asp>. An informal survey was again done following the August 2013 meeting to gauge consensus around the emerging accreditation process and standards and get feedback from institutions offering one or more programs in emergency management. The survey report is available at: <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/edu/EMFoundation.asp>.

The accreditation working group was again convened in September 2014 to continue its work to draft an accreditation process and standards. Participants in the working group include:

Emily Bentley

Savannah University

Representative for face-to-face programs
and bachelor's degrees

Board member of the Council for the
Accreditation of Emergency Management
Higher Education* (CAEME)

Anthony Brown

Oklahoma State University

Representative for face-to-face and online
degree programs and master's and doctoral
level degrees

Representative of the International Fire
Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC)

Randy Egsegian
Durham Technical Community College
Representative for online programs and
associates degrees

Jessica Jensen
North Dakota State University
Representative for face-to-face programs
and bachelor's, master's, and doctoral
degrees

Dave McEntire
University of North Texas
Representative for face-to-face programs
and bachelor's degrees
Serves on Council for the Accreditation of
Emergency Management Higher Education*
site accreditation team

Stacy Muffet-Willet
University of Akron
Representative for blended programs and
bachelor's degrees
Degree program holds IFSAC accreditation

Sandy Smith
Arkansas Tech University
Representative for face-to-face and online
programs and bachelor's and master's
degrees
Degree program holds FFHEA accreditation

Daryl Spiewak
Board member of the Representative for the
Council for the Accreditation of Emergency
Management Higher Education* (CAEME)

Sepi Yalda
Millersville University
Representative for online master's degrees

*formerly known as Foundation for Higher Education Accreditation (FFHEA)

The group represents institutions with associates, bachelors, master's, and doctoral programs as well as programs offered in blended, wholly online, and wholly face-to-face formats.

Report

The working group meeting began with updates from Daryl Spiewak, representative of the Council for the Accreditation of Emergency Management Higher Education (CAEME) and Tony Brown, representative of the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC). CAEME and IFSAC are the two bodies that are currently and/or currently intend to accredit emergency management higher education programs.

CAEME Update

The Foundation for Higher Education Accreditation (FFHEA) is the body that had been accrediting emergency management higher education programs before the accreditation working group began its work. FFHEA had accredited 2 bachelor's programs (1 was also reaccredited after 5 years) and 1 associate of arts degree, but it placed a moratorium on accreditations while the FEMA-convened accreditation working group efforts were underway. The body has requests for accreditation pending from 8 institutions offering one or more degree programs and 1 offering a certificate program. FFHEA discovered a need to reapply for nonprofit status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and decided to change its name to the Council for the Accreditation of Emergency Management Higher Education (CAEME) to reflect its exclusive focus on emergency management programs. When it reapplied for nonprofit status, it applied

with FFHEA's bylaws with only minor modification. The board is currently working on setting up a new website for the organization (www.caeme.org) and is in the midst of, or has completed, a variety of other tasks identified on the recent flyer distributed by the organization (see Appendix A). CAEME welcomes ongoing feedback related to the documents that will soon be on its website (e.g., bylaws) but has no current plans to conduct a formal feedback process with institutions offering one or more degree programs. CAEME indicated (as an update to the flyer) that it awaits the recommendations of the accreditation working group and expects to vote on adoption of the standards it proposes as soon as the standards are ready.

IFSAC Update

In its spring meeting, IFSAC decided to continue pressing forward with the accreditation of emergency management higher education programs because so many fire and emergency management programs are co-located within institutions. It has accredited four programs thus far (2 associates and 2 bachelors). There are no programs currently awaiting accreditation. IFSAC will continue to review the documents put forth by the accreditation working group. An invitation has been extended to the group to talk about the accreditation of emergency management higher education programs at their upcoming spring 2015 meeting.

Following these organizational updates, Jessica Jensen, provided an update about the survey underway to get feedback on the emerging process and general program standards that the group had drafted in 2013. The survey was set to close the day after the group's meeting. Jensen reviewed areas of concern among respondents to that point and recommended the group wait to discuss possible changes based on the feedback until a later date because the survey was not yet closed and the final reminder was just sent yet sent. The group concurred.

Next, the group debated how to proceed in its time together. The majority determined it best to focus on drafting standards for emergency management bachelor's level degree programs. From this point on, the group spent significant time involved in the following:

- Debate related to and drafting of standards related to curriculum structure and assessment.
- Review of existing documents to inform discussions regarding program content standards including the IFSAC standards (available at: <http://www.ifsac.org/cahand.html>), the FFHEA/CAEME standards (available at: <http://www.caeme.org/clients>), the FEMA Higher Education Program sponsored Bachelor's Curriculum Outcomes (<https://www.training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/edu/curriculumoutcomes/>), and the 2013 report from the FEMA Higher Education Program sponsored disciplinary purview working group entitled, "Scholarship and Research to Ground the Emerging Discipline of Emergency Management" (available at: <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/edu/emTheoryResearch.asp>).
- Discussion of how specific the program content standards ought to be.
- Conversation about what would be considered indicators of various content standards if the standards were written broadly or without specificity.
- Discussion related to supplementary materials that might be required if the standards were written broadly or without specificity (e.g., a model curriculum,

appendixes/supplementary document with lists of applicable sub-topics related to broad topical areas).

- After determining that the group's initial efforts would be devoted to drafting broad program content standards, dialogue revolved around
 - program content standards including differences between foundational topics and core topical areas related to preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery that would be part of an emergency management education and how to address the key issue of experiential learning.
 - differences between training and education and building knowledge and building skills in emergency management

Discussion in these areas led to the following draft standards:

Program Objectives and Curriculum Structure

The program has defined program learning outcomes for the degree.

The curriculum is reflected in a written degree plan.

Course learning objectives, consistent across sections and semesters, have been established for each course reflected in the degree plan and support the program learning outcomes regardless of delivery mode.

Each course in the degree plan has a syllabus.

The curriculum follows a logical sequence that begins with foundational content and progresses to more complex and in-depth content.

The program maintains an ongoing process, documented in written procedures, to assess achievement of course and program learning outcomes and to improve curriculum, course content, and instructional delivery.

The program uses input from internal and external constituencies to develop and implement strategies to improve curriculum, course content, and instructional delivery.

Program assessment data is publicly accessible.

Courses in the curriculum are grounded on the basis of significant, substantive research in relevant topic area(s).

Courses include and advocate the evaluation of current literature to prepare students for life-long learning.

Courses in the curriculum address topics that benefit students pursuing career paths in emergency management in public, private, and non-governmental sectors.

Program Content

These standards are not intended to dictate specifics of program design. Program design is left to the discretion of the academic unit. Topics below must be covered as part of the curriculum, but individual or specific courses for each topic are not required.

The following foundational topics are addressed in the program curriculum:

- Hazards, hazard processes and characteristics, and hazard analysis
- Vulnerability theories, types, and analysis
- Risk, risk perception, and risk assessment
- Crises, emergencies, disasters, catastrophes, complex humanitarian events, and distinctions among the types
- Historical and contextual awareness of disasters and emergency management.
- Professionalism of the field including *The Principles of Emergency Management*, ethics, certifications, and associations/ affiliations related to different career options
- International and comparative dimensions of emergency management

Key topics across the mission areas of mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery are covered in the curriculum, including:

- Social, cultural, and economic dimensions relevant to emergency management
- Political, legal, and fiscal contexts of emergency management
- Current emergency management policy and standards that guide emergency management practice
- Tasks and activities of individuals and households, organizations, communities, and levels of government, including functional areas, across the public, private, and non-governmental sectors
- Use and implications of communication methods and technological tools relevant to emergency management

The program provides opportunities to gain practical experience and requires either a credit-based internship of a minimum of 150 contact hours or a practicum.

While building knowledge related to the above-listed areas, the program provides students opportunities to develop the following skills:

- Written, verbal, interpersonal, and group communication
- Network-building and stakeholder engagement
- Analytical thinking, problem solving, and decision making
- Application of research in practice
- Leadership

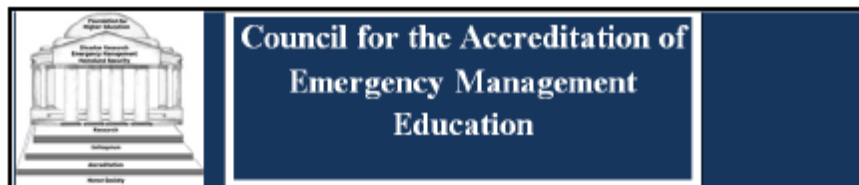
It took considerable time for the group to achieve consensus around the topics and language in the standards noted above. The group determined that it would solicit the feedback from institutions offering degree programs in emergency management before preparing any supplementary materials that might accompany the standards for the purposes of, for example, self-study.

In the short time remaining in its meeting, the working group decided to split into smaller sub-groups to tackle indicators for the standards and issues related to the organizational structure and processes of an accrediting body for emergency management higher education programs. The sub-group members agreed to work on tasks in each of these areas and report on progress made during an upcoming conference call (currently slated for the week of December 14). The sub-groups began their work up until the time came for the group to adjourn.

The group identified a series of tasks that need to be conducted in the coming months. It expressed interest in tackling some tasks between face-to-face meetings of the group, but believed it needs a minimum of 1 if not 2 more face-to-face meetings before a full draft set of standards and supplementary materials would be available for the accrediting bodies to use. Tasks that need to be addressed in the coming months include:

- Continue the process of gathering and implementing the feedback of higher education institutions offering one or more degree programs by
 - Conducting a survey on draft program content standards for feedback for next working group meeting.
 - Based on emerging concerns reflected in the survey update provided by Jensen, assess other accreditation bodies for how human resource and faculty standards are written. Specifically, group members will review these standards in accrediting bodies related to fire, emergency medical services, psychology, business administration, nursing, public administration,
 - At next working group meeting, discuss and debate what changes will be made to the standards based on the feedback provided through the surveys.
 - Edit standards document to reflect changes.
- Create self-study document to accompany the standards.
- Create any necessary supplementary materials to support implementation of the standards (e.g., model curriculum, lists of sub-topic related to broad topical areas identified in the program content standards.
- Create an appendix or supplement detailing the standards. (if time/resources allow?)
- Discuss and make recommendations to accrediting bodies regarding membership, fees, and cost issues.
- Determine the process and who should be involved in the working group related to developing program content standards for associates, masters, and doctoral degree programs.
- Develop program content standards for associates, masters, and doctoral degree programs.

Appendix A. Council for the Accreditation of Emergency Management Education Flyer



Current Status

- ☑ CAEME Board waiting until after FEMA Focus Group meeting in September to complete work on standards, assessor training, self-study guide

Tasks

- ☑ Incorporated in South Carolina and name changed (CAEME instead of FFHEA) – Mike Kelley is registered agent
- ☑ IRS 501 (c) 3 status stalled – Can resubmit when appropriate documentation completed
- ☑ Web page revised and updated <http://www.caeme.org> In process of changing links and name with other groups
- ☑ New bylaws established
- ☑ Membership categories established to create funding source
- ☑ When funding established, position for administrative assistant will be filled
- ☑ Funding requirements proposed for membership, assessment, etc
- ☑ Financial decisions made for CAEME and EPP
- ☑ CAEME will have a comment period for standards
- ☑ Formal accrediting agency status deferred; accreditation process will continue
- ☑ Discussions about D&O insurance for Board
- ☑ Daryl Spiewak and Bill Waugh are working on program to train assessors
- ☑ Daryl Spiewak and Kay Goss maintaining list of programs interested in accreditation
- ☑ Epsilon Pi Phi Honor Society
 - Current membership is 700+
 - Chapter opened in Canada, chapter under development in Turkey

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